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REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Institutional arrangements to follow up the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

Statement of the Administrative Committee on Coordination to the General Assembly

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) is mindful that meeting the unprecedented and daunting challenges involved in achieving sustainable development will require special efforts from the entire international community. It recognizes that only the United Nations system is able to provide the appropriate global framework for action at international, regional, national and local levels. It further recognizes that implementation of Agenda 21 means tackling complex inter-sectoral problems; this will require greater coherence at intergovernmental and inter-agency levels and a better interface between them, as well as with non-governmental organizations.

2. ACC is also mindful that its consideration of the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development by the United Nations system is taking place within a context in which parallel developments, as yet incomplete, leave a number of unknowns. These developments include: (a) ACC's own review of its subsidiary machinery; (b) the proposals of the Secretary-General on organizational arrangements for the Commission on

Sustainable Development, its secretariat support structure, and the high-level advisory body, to be considered by the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session; (c) the views of the General Assembly on the Conference, in particular the institutional and financing arrangements it proposed; and (d) the restructuring of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields. Taking the above into account and as a contribution to discussion on the follow-up to the Conference, ACC offers below its views on various issues identified in Agenda 21 for the United Nations system.

II. PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES FOR THE ALLOCATION AND SHARING OF RESPONSIBILITIES WITHIN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AGENDA 21

3. ACC underlines that the overall goal in examining an allocation and sharing of responsibilities is to optimize the contribution of the United Nations system to the implementation of Agenda 21 through enhancing opportunities for cooperation, filling gaps and avoiding duplication of effort. ACC recommends that an allocation and sharing of responsibilities should evolve from a process based on an analysis of on-going and planned activities of organizations of the United Nations system vis-à-vis Agenda 21 programme areas: areas covered by on-going activities, areas where there could be duplication, areas where there are gaps and areas where activities could be joined in such a way as to create greater synergy. Areas where a large number of organizations are involved would require inter-agency consultations and, where appropriate, joint programming. This could be facilitated through existing mechanisms or ad hoc consultations. These ad hoc consultations should be called either by the lead agency concerned with the subject area or, where no clear lead agency exists, by the secretariat support structure of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

III. ENHANCED COOPERATION BETWEEN THE MULTILATERAL FUNDING INSTITUTIONS AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

4. ACC notes that Agenda 21 highlights the need for improved cooperation between financing institutions and other United Nations organizations. ACC views the rationale for enhanced cooperation as not merely to link executing and funding agencies, but also to integrate different capacities and experience available within the United Nations system for the benefit of Member nations. To achieve this, ACC recommends that substantial consultation and exchange of information be undertaken, particularly at country and programme levels. While for the former, the role of the Resident Coordinator should be supported, the latter would be important particularly for the new financing mechanisms such as the Global Environment Facility and UNDP's Capacity 21; United Nations specialized agencies should be increasingly involved as cooperating and executing agencies in these mechanisms.

IV. FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS

5. ACC notes the recognition, in Agenda 21, that "financial resources are also required for strengthening the capacity of United Nations institutions for the implementation of Agenda 21" and that "the provision of new and additional financial resources should be both adequate and predictable". It further notes that it will be up to the secretariats and governing bodies of organizations of the United Nations system to assess their respective additional financial requirements related to implementation of Agenda 21.

6. ACC urges that, taking into account these assessments of requirements, zero-growth budgetary policies be relaxed in order to enable the relevant parts of the United Nations system to play their full role in the implementation of Agenda 21. Similarly, the timely and full payment of contributions and all arrears would enable organizations to re-establish their full programme delivery capacities.

7. At the same time, ACC stresses the imperative need to provide supplementary resources to relevant organizations of the United Nations system. For, while all organizations are committed to implementing the recommendations of the Conference to the extent possible within existing resources, the provision of additional funds will be a conditio sine qua non for their full and effective response to the new demands generated by Agenda 21 (including those for inter-agency coordination and cooperation). ACC also strongly supports the replenishment of the Global Environment Facility in 1993 and the financing of UNDP's Capacity 21, as both would provide resources for the implementation of part of Agenda 21.

V. ARRANGEMENTS FOR COOPERATION AND COORDINATION

8. ACC is taking steps to ensure effective cooperation and coordination in the follow-up to the Conference by the United Nations system. It notes that the complexity and enormity of the challenges involved, as well as the scarcity of resources available to tackle them, require maximization of opportunities for streamlining the use of expertise and resources, in order to achieve greater synergy, value added, integration and cost-effectiveness from the activities of the United Nations system. The Committee stresses that coordination is not an end in itself but a means to achieve these benefits.

VI. THE COORDINATION MACHINERY

9. ACC recalls that Agenda 21 suggested that consideration be given "to establishing a special task force, subcommittee or sustainable development board" to assist it in fulfilling its high-level coordinating role for the United Nations system. ACC recognizes that indeed solid analytical work will be needed to underpin ACC's action in this regard. It considers that none of the existing inter-agency mechanisms has the requisite functions, experience and capacities to provide this. Accordingly, ACC has decided to streamline

and improve the functioning of the existing ACC subsidiary machinery. It has further decided to establish an Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development (IACSD), which will form part of a three-tier machinery to coordinate the follow-up to the Conference by the United Nations system.

10. The machinery will comprise:

(a) ACC itself, as indicated in Agenda 21, which will be the high-level inter-agency coordination mechanism for policy decision-making;

(b) The streamlined existing ACC subsidiary machinery and other inter-agency coordination arrangements, which will ensure complementarity and synergy in the implementation of programme areas of Agenda 21, at the technical level and the working level;

(c) The new Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development, which will constitute the intermediate level between coordination of technical work and ACC decision-making in the substantive area of sustainable development, with a view to enhancing ACC decision-making, reporting to intergovernmental bodies and the effectiveness of relevant inter-agency coordination arrangements.

11. The Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development will have participation at the level of senior officials from a core number of ACC members and participants, while remaining open to all ACC members and participants interested in specific issues placed on the agenda of its sessions. The composition of the core group will be reviewed after two years by ACC. ACC has requested the Committee to meet before ACC's first regular session of 1993, with a view to launching a process of inter-agency consultations for the follow-up to the Conference, aiming to assist ACC in (a) streamlining the coordinating machinery, (b) allocating and sharing responsibilities for the implementation of Agenda 21 by the United Nations system, (c) monitoring new and additional financing requirements of organizations of the United Nations system related to Agenda 21, taking into account the decisions of their governing bodies, and (d) assessing new and existing reporting requirements related to implementation of Agenda 21, and making recommendations for their streamlining. As indicated in Agenda 21, this inter-agency mechanism should be serviced by the secretariat support structure of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

VII. REPORTING

12. On the basis of a brief review of existing reporting requirements and those requested in Agenda 21, ACC, without wishing to prejudge the decisions of competent bodies, the Commission on Sustainable Development in particular, makes the following observations:

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(a) Some resolutions and decisions adopted by intergovernmental bodies prior to the Conference called for periodic reporting which, in all likelihood, will be duplicated by reports requested in Agenda 21. Multiple and duplicative reporting from the United Nations system would indicate a lack of coordination and should be avoided. Moreover, it would have serious budgetary implications (costs for staff time and governing body deliberations). There is also a risk that, within intergovernmental bodies such as the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, Governments could review subjects which they had already examined in the governing body of the technically competent organization, and that, as different ministries may be involved, different, or even conflicting, guidance could be provided, unless a clear distinction is made between overall, cross-sectoral policy issues and technical/sectoral issues;

(b) It would be beneficial for the various monitoring bodies (governing bodies, ACC, the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly) to coordinate to the extent possible their examination of progress in implementation of various parts of Agenda 21. This would allow central monitoring bodies to be aware of the technical policy advice given by Governments in the other forums. In this case, it would be useful for the Commission on Sustainable Development to receive relevant extracts of reports adopted by the governing bodies of organizations of the United Nations system.

13. In view of the above, ACC has decided that an assessment of new and existing reporting requirements relevant to Agenda 21 should be undertaken by IACSD with the help of the secretariat support structure. IACSD should report its findings and recommendations to ACC, including proposals to avoid duplication in reporting, ensure cost-effectiveness and foster integration of environment and development. ACC will use these findings and recommendations to propose streamlining of the reporting process to the Commission on Sustainable Development, other United Nations intergovernmental bodies, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly.
